

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 5084

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MORG, PINT, SP
SUBJECT: SPAIN MOVES TOWARD MILITARY MODERNITY -- A DEFENSE MINISTRY
IS CREATED

1. WE WOULD DRAW THE DEPARTMENT'S ATTENTION TO US DAO
MADRID 051430Z JUL 77 WHICH REPORTS THE CONTINUATION IN
OFFICE AS A MEMBER OF THE NEW SUAREZ CABINET OF LT. GEN.
GUTIERREZ MELLADO AS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEFENSE
MATTERS AND THE DROPPING FROM THE CABINET OF SEPARATE
MINISTRIES OF ARMY, NAVY AND AIR. THUS ENDS A LONG
ANOMALY AMONG MAJOR WESTERN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS, ON
WHICH HAD BEEN A VITAL PART OF FRANCO'S EFFORTS TO
PREVENT DOMESTIC RIVALS TO HIS AUTHORITY.

2. THIS DEFINITIVE MOVE TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF A FULL-
FLEDGED DEFENSE MINISTRY IN SPAIN HAS BEEN LONG EXPECTED,
WITH ONLY THE TIMING IN QUESTION. THE BASIS HAD BEEN
ESTABLISHED OVER THE PAST MONTHS BY VARIOUS SMALL STEPS,
THE KEY ONE OF WHICH SEPARATED THE MINISTERS OF AIR AND
ARMY FROM PURELY MILITARY TASKS, WHICH WERE TURNED
OVER TO THEIR CHIEFS OF STAFF (A SITUATION
ALREADY LONG EXISTING IN THE NAVY). WHILE MANY
SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS ARE LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC
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ABOUT THE CHANGE, THE MAJORITY OF THE MILITARY
ESTABLISHMENT CERTAINLY RECOGNIZES THE UTILITY OF
GREATER UNITY TO MODERNIZATION EFFORTS AND IS PLEASED
TO LOWER THE MILITARY'S POLITICAL PROFILE. THE AIR
FORCE LEADERSHIP WILL, INCIDENTALLY, BE MOST UNHAPPY WITH
THE LOSS TO THE NEW MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICA-
TIONS OF THE CONTROL OVER CIVIL AVIATION IN SPAIN.

3. THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM PROGRAM AS ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT YET, ON THE MILITARY FRONT, GO BEYOND PLACING GUIERREZ MELLADO IN THE POSITION OF THE SINGLE DEFENSE VOICE IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND FORMALLY DECREED THE EXISTENCE OF A NEW MINISTRY. GUTIERREZ MELLADO'S OWN CLOSEST MILITARY ASSISTANT WAS QUICK TO SAY TO US THAT A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE DURING THE SUMMER TO FILL THE VOID WHICH HAS BEEN CREATED BY THIS DECISION AND TO REESTABLISH CLEARLY AND EFFECTIVELY VARIOUS LINES OF AUTHORITY. TO SOME EXTENT THIS SITUATION RESULTS FROM THE HURRY IN WHICH THE FINAL DECISIONS WERE TAKEN FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS, BUT TO SOME EXTENT IT ALSO PROBABLY REFLECTS THE RELUCTANCE TO PRESS TOO HARD TOO FAST THOSE SENIOR MILITARY OFFICIALS IN OPPOSITION, WHO WILL HAVE TO BE BROUGHT AROUND CAREFULLY. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER GUTIERREZ MELLADO, WHO ALREADY BEARS THE SCARS OF SEVERAL DIFFICULT DECISIONS IN SUPPORT OF SUAREZ, WILL BE ABLE TO REGAIN THEIR FULL COOPERATION.

4. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT AS PART OF THE INITIAL PACKAGE GUTIERREZ MELLADO HAS ASKED TO BE PASSED TO THE SEMI-ACTIVE "CATEGORY B" STATUS, ONE WHICH IS INCONSISTENT WITH A DIRECT ROLE IN THE MILITARY CHAIN OF COMMAND. THIS IS A MOVE TOWARD EVENTUAL CIVILIAN

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CONTROL. IT MAY WELL BE IN PART ALSO A CONCESSION TO HIS DETRACTORS IN THE SENIOR MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, WHO MAY BE MORE ACCEPTING OF THE REFORM SHOULD IT BECOME CLEAR THAT THE AS YET UNNAMED NEW PRESIDENT OF THE JUNTA OF CHIEFS OF STAFF (COINCIDENTALLY, THE CHIEF OF THE HIGH GENERAL STAFF) IS TO BE THE SENIOR ACTIVE MILITARY OFFICER IN THE CHAIN.

5. FROM GUTIERREZ MELLADO'S KEY MILITARY AIDE WE ALSO HAVE THE INFORMATION THAT THE MINISTER'S POLITICAL/ ADMINISTRATIVE LINE OF AUTHORITY IS EXPECTED TO RUN THROUGH A SINGLE SUB-SECRETARY TO THREE DIRECTORS-GENERAL, ONE FOR EACH SERVICE. WITH RESPECT TO THE MILITARY CHAIN OF COMMAND, OUR SOURCE WAS LESS CERTAIN, INDICATING THAT AUTHORITY WOULD FOLLOW IN SOME WAY TO THE CHIEFS OF STAFF WITH INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE JUNTA OF THE CHIEFS OF STAFF. HIS VAGUENESS COULD REFLECT THE ABSENCE OF A FINAL DECISIONS IN THIS AREA.

6. WHILE MORE MUST BE KNOWN BEFORE A DEFINITIVE JUDGEMENT ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS SIGNIFICANT NEW MEASURE CAN BE MADE, IT IS NOT TOO

SOON TO POINT OUT THAT THIS IS FURTHER TESTIMONY TO THE
ABILITY OF THE KING, SUAREZ AND GUTIERREZ MELLADO, WORKING AS A
TEAM, TO BRING THE SPANISH MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT ALONG AT
RATHER MUCH THE SAME PACE OF REFORM AS THAT BEING
APPLIED IN OTHER SECTORS OF SPANISH POLITICAL LIFE. STABLER

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